Thursday, 28 October, 1993

JOHN'S LEAVING!

I'm writing this the morning after he called to let me know of his job offer back in his hometown of Fargo, North Dakota, to record my almost violently mixed feelings about that news. The part of me which loves John deeply is pleased & very happy for him, for this opportunity to effect a job/career change in a direction which has such appeal & great prospects for a person of his talents, creativity & enthusiasm. The selfish part of me is deeply disappointed that he is leaving this area, for I value his friendship & love, personally, as well as his joy & enthusiasm with the Rochester Freedom Singers!

So I'm really "shook" about this turn of events. Yet, I know that, for John, this is truly "an opportunity of a lifetime"--to return to his roots and take up a profession for which he is eminently suited & certainly qualified. With his unique gifts, especially for the English language, he is sure to be a "smashing success" as editor of his hometown newspaper, and there's no doubt that he will make significant contributions to the quality of life in North Dakota. As they say, "Our loss, their gain."

In addition to all the personal aspects of John's departure (and certainly NOT to minimize the gaps left by the departures of Matt Murray & Rose!), I'm also concerned about a unique gap which John leaves. I have in mind his particular "stake" in the Freedom Singers, that special commitment and especially the passion which he has brought to the chorus. While each of the rest of us in the chorus certainly brings special talents & enthusiasm to the group, I feel very strongly that John's feelings about F/S are particularly deep and will be difficult if not impossible to replace. I certainly don't have those special gifts, even though I know that almost all of us have the commitment & dedication.

I know the chorus will survive, even with John's departure, and even grow, both in quantity & in quality. I would express the hope that each of us, privately & individually, would reassess our attitude towards the Freedom Singers, then attempt to formulate ways & means to fill the gaps left by John's departure. How can we, individually & collectively, take up the slack, replenish the enthusiasm & joy of our choral/spiritual "mission"? What can each one of us do to make the chorus "work" even better? As we come up with "ways & means" to do that, let's step forward with ideas, energies & efforts so that, even with John in North Dakota (to help form the "Fargo Freedom Singers"?), the Rochester Freedom Singers will rise to take a leadership role in promoting unity, inclusion (John's favorite word), freedom & brother/sisterhood in our town, our country & our lives! I call upon each one of us to do whatever it takes, individually & collectively, to make that happen!

To JOHN: go with our blessings, our respect & admiration, our deep affection & love and all our very best wishes for a truly fulfilling & gratifying life!